DOCTOR WHO

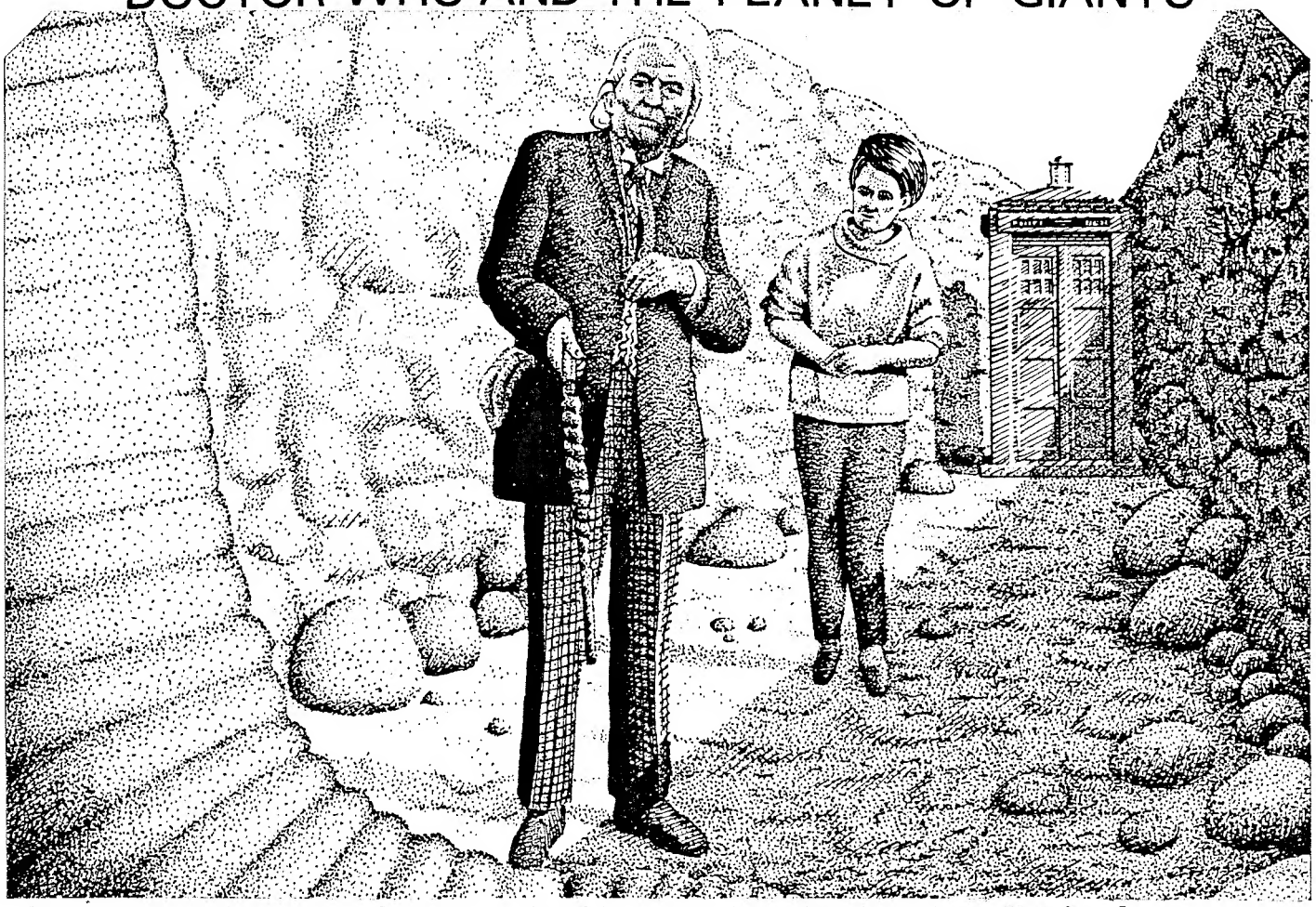
SERIAL J

Planet of Giants

BY LOUIS MARKS

An Adventure in Space & Time

DOCTOR WHO AND THE PLANET OF GIANTS



The TARDIS has developed a fault, and the Doctor has to implement emergency procedures to prevent its destruction. Hurriedly the ship is materialised, and the four travellers emerge into a strange world of giant insects...The horrifying truth dawns upon them. The TARDIS has materialised between two crazy-paving stones, and all the insects are normal size. The travellers themselves have become miniaturised!

As they set off to explore this giant world, which seems to be Earth in the present-day, they face all the hazards that being one inch tall brings. Fortunately, the insects they first encounter are all dead and, at this point, they are unaware and largely uninterested in the reasons for this. However, they soon become caught up in the evil machinations of a man named Forester. Forester has given financial backing to research into a new insecticide called DN6, this research carried out by a scientist named Smithers. However, the research program has run into problems. A government inspector, Farrow, has discovered that the insecticide's molecules are stable rather than ephemeral, its powerful effects permanent rather than transitory. He has realised that this will mean the total destruction of all insect life and, eventually, the human race. Before he can make his report back to his department Forester kills him in cold-blood, and then persuades Smithers to help him conceal the murder. Forester does not reveal the contents of Farrow's report to Smithers, and asks the scientist to proceed with the research.

Having survived such ordeals as tumbling into a matchbox, harassment by a cat, climbing up the inside of a drain-pipe, and almost being washed down a plug-hole, the travellers try to contact the telephone exchange operator, with no success, by lifting the receiver from its rest with the use of corks, and then shouting down the huge mouth-piece. However, the suspicious operator alerts her Policeman husband to the strange goings-on at Smithers' house, and he sets off to investigate. For their part, the travellers improvise an explosive device - an aerosol can heated by a lighted gas-tap - which explodes in Forester's face before he can kill Smithers. The Policeman arrives, and the travellers return to the TARDIS, and to normal size.

DRAMA EXTRACT

"He pulled it out of his pocket and told me he was stealing the formula. I struggled with him, the gun must have been turned to his body. It went off..." Forester broke off as Smithers finished his examination of Farrow'd dead body. The white-coated scientist raised himself from his haunches and sniffed the bloodstain on his hand.

"I wouldn't try telling that story to the Police if I were you," he remarked dourly.

Forester raised a quizzical eyebrow. "Why not?"

"Oh, don't be a fool. He's been shot through the heart from some feet away," added Smithers, pointing to the spreading marks on the dead man's body. "Even I can see that, and I'm no expert." He knelt down again and fingered the wound carefully. "There are no powder burns around the bullet hole."

"You're very detached about it," observed Forester, a faint smile flickering about his mouth.

"Well what did you expect? Hysterics? I've seen more death than you can imagine. People dying of starvation all over the world. What do you think I started on research for?" Smithers stood up and advanced on his employer. "What puzzles me is how cool you are..."

Forester regarded Farrow's corpse for a second. "I don't feel guilty, if that's what you mean. I'm too busy working out what the implications are."

"Destroying the last year's work; that's what it means," said Smithers bitterly. "And if that seems callous, all right it is! Farrow was pushed onto me and he was a nuisance and a fool. Always checking every minor detail. I've worked fifteen, sometimes sixteen, hours a day, every day, on this experiment."

"Yes, I know," nodded Forester, quietly.

"You don't know anything!" exploded the elder figure. "All you care about is how much money you can make." Smithers turned away and looked out across the well cared for garden. The rich, verdant grass, the winding crazy-paving threading its way from the patio to the fence - all emblems of a burning devotion to his interests and hobbies. Right now, his major interest was DN6. This insecticide would be so powerful no aphides could withstand its effects, nor ever develop an immunity to it. That was what he had promised Forester when he went to him months ago looking for essential research backing.

"Why did you have to kill him?" he implored. "Couldn't you have given him some money - bought him off?"

Smithers' shoulders dropped in despair, resigned now to his fate as an accomplice in murder. Forester placed a firm hand on his arm. "Look, Smithers, I know what you've put into the experiment, but this doesn't mean the end of everything."

"Of course it does. You've ruined everything. It's all finished - wasted!"

"Not necessarily," pondered Forester, a cunning note in his voice now. "Farrow was going on a holiday. He has a boat. He was going across to France by himself in it. It's anchored about ten miles away..."

DOCTOR WHO - AN ADVENTURE IN SPACE AND TIME

SERIES EDITOR...TIM ROBINS
DEPUTY EDITOR.GARY HOPKINS
ARTWORK..STUART GLAZEBROOK
TONY CLARK

WRITERS.....JEREMY BENTHAM
GARY HOPKINS
PAUL MOUNT
JOHN PEEL

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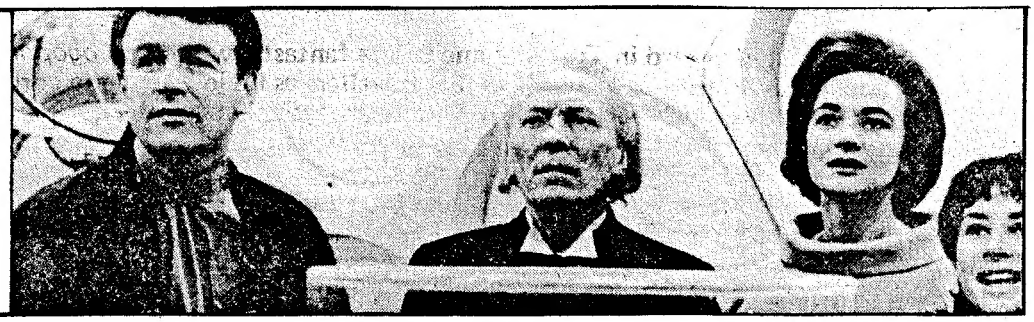
STORY REVIEW

PAUL MOUNT



Seven weeks separate 'The Reign of Terror' from 'Planet of Giants', the first serial of the second season of 'Doctor Who', and yet the divide between the two, conceptually at least, is very much wider. To describe the two seasons as 'entirely different programmes' would be to exaggerate in the extreme, but in many respects the whole tone and flavour of the series altered subtly with this ultimately disappointing tale of the Doctor and his companions reduced to Lilliputian proportions.

'Planet of Giants' is something of a curate's egg in that the aspects of it which worked did so quite brilliantly, but other facets which did not work quite plainly failed, an opinion evidently shared by the production crew at the time, as its truncation from four episodes to an unusual three bears testimony. However, to be fair, Louis Marks' valid alternative explanation (see bottom of page '9-10') is also worth considering, if only to underline the perennial problem of costs. Visually 'Planet of Giants' is faultless, with all director Mervyn Pinfield's considerable camera expertise coming into play admirably; but where the serial is let down is in its less than inspiring plot. Whilst the initial idea of causing the travellers to be miniaturised when the TARDIS doors swing half-open mid-flight, to then chronicle their adventures as they become split up and struggle to regain the sanctuary of the ship, is sound enough, the story's 'parallel' plot, involving the deadly insecticide DN6 and the ruthless Forester's determination to see it marketed at any cost, isn't quite 'Doctor Who' at this time...or indeed any time. Whereas the whole of the first season possessed an indefinable 'timeless' quality, 'Planet of Giants' is the first serial to effectively date 'Doctor Who'; the first story whereby it is possible to pin the production down to one specific time. Both the plot and the supporting players are taken straight from one of the hoary old B-movies of the 1950's, revolving around shifty-eyed gangsters and rotund local bobbies. Whilst Forester and his reluctant sidekick, Smithers, are cold characters, for whom we can feel no affinity nor sympathy, the other incidentals, Hilda and Bert Rowse, are oddly likeable, out of place as they may be in 'Doctor Who'. The former is the alert telephone exchange operator, suspicious of the strange 'phone calls and the unfamiliar voice from Smithers' laboratory; the latter is the hero in blue, straight out of 'Dixon of Dock Green', who dons his helmet to save the day and arrest the villains...with a little unsuspected help from the Doctor and his friends.

Despite the archaic quality of the backup characters, the Doctor and his entourage remain unaffected by the cliches of the plot, and are as ageless and eternal as ever, possibly because of the fact that the two sets of characters operate in two concurrant plots, which never dovetail but merely skirt each other at the end of the final episode. All four leads are as beautifully portrayed as ever, with Jacqueline Hill giving a fine performance in one of the most interesting developments of the story, where Barbara is accidentally infected by DN6 but refuses to tell the others of her misfortune until it is almost too late. The script tends to hammer home her predicament a little too much, with constant references to it, but it's one of the few incidents from the serial which lift 'Planet of Giants' marginally above the mundane. The 'softening' of the Doctor has become quite marked now, although a trace of the old irascibility manifests itself in the first episode, soon after the TARDIS malfunctions. Back in the ship at the end of their ordeal, with Barbara

cured of the sickness by being returned to normal size, the Doctor replies to Ian's thanks with "Always at your service".....a far cry from the potential killer of "The Forest of Fear" (see 'The Tribe of Gum' release) and the cold, enigmatic alien of many other earlier episodes. The Doctor has already perceptibly mellowed into the Grandfather-figure he was identified with throughout the remainder of that incarnation.

The production is as immaculate and careful as tended to be the norm in those experimental early days, and 'Planet of Giants' serves as a good example of the production team attempting something new and different within the basic 'Doctor Who' format. The storyline demanded a great number of detailed and intricate larger-then-life-sized props to be created, and there's no denying that the finished visual result is at worst impressive, and at best breathtaking. The most remarkable sequence involves Barbara's encounter with a huge housefly, which is a masterpiece of visual effects, as it is a meticulously detailed and beautifully manipulated puppet, nearly three feet in length, complete with quivering mandibles and quizzically-swaying head. In fact, of all the props designed by Ray Cusick for 'Planet of Giants' the fly was by far the most ingenious. The other insects featured in the story were simple rigid armatures, covered with latex and foam rubber suitably painted or, in the case of the bee, inlaid with spiky fur. The ploy of having DN6 lethal to all insect life meant that few of the insect props needed to be animated. However, the fly had to articulate all the natural movements of an insect - the twitching wings, the turning head, and the abdomen flexing in counter-balance. Thin nylon wires, sprayed matt black to stop them showing up under the studio lights, were attached to the moving sections, all of them fully flexible due to the inclusion of socket joints in the armature construction, the whole operated then by the puppet principle from an overhead gantry. The fly could not be shown taking off or landing, though, as the legs had to be of rigid metal to support the heavy puppet. Hence, had the insect attempted flight the limbs would have remained splayed out, thus destroying what was otherwise a very effective prop.

Although the travellers are never seen 'in shot' with the giants back-projection is used to its best advantage in several sequences, most notably when they find themselves wandering in front of the lifeless face of the recently murdered government inspector, Farrow. The other over-sized props and sets, such as the sink in the laboratory (scene of surely the most bizarre cliffhanger ending in 'Doctor Who' history, as water drains away down the plug-hole where the Doctor and Susan are hiding); the startling dead worm which gives the first indication as we emerge from the TARDIS that things are not as they should be; the dead ant and its eggs; the huge matchbox which proves to be Ian's undoing, and the briefcase, combine with camera-trickery to create the believable appearance of four normal people reduced "roughly to the size of an inch". Also of note is the shot where we see the TARDIS lodged in its landing-place between two flagstones, panning up to see the giant house looming up and along the suburban garden-path in the near distance.

'Planet of Giants' is furthermore noteworthy as the first appearance of Dudley Simpson providing incidental music for the programme. Frankly, it is not an auspicious start to such a long career within the series, as the music is mostly inane and childish, with the special exception of the typically-Simpson passage at the end of part two as the aforementioned water drains away down the aforementioned sink.

'Planet of Giants' is probably the first major chink in the otherwise unflawed armour of 'Doctor Who' at the time, despite the shortcomings of both 'The Keys of Marinus' and 'The Sensorites' in the first season; but, as the TARDIS settled again at the end of the third episode, with the scanner showing nothing but a blur, little indication was there that all memory of this brief, entertaining diversion would soon be swamped by something far more memorable...

CHARACTER PROFILES.

JOHN PEEL

FARROW: "The very exhaustive tests that I have made show that DN6 is totally destructive."

Farrow is an employee of an unnamed government department, and has been assigned to investigate the feasibility of allowing the new chemical insecticide of Smithers' to be mass-produced. Although at first it seemed quite favourable, Farrow realises that the totally destructive powers of the chemical render it useless. He cuts short Forester's bribery attempt by his native honesty, and refuses to be turned from his aim of declaring DN6 unsafe. Intending to spend the next few weeks on a boating holiday on the rivers of France, he is instead murdered by Forester in an attempt to circumvent the ban.

FORESTER: "Do you know why I'm a success, Mr. Farrow? Because I've never allowed the word 'can't' to exist."

Money and success are the gods of Forester. Nothing must stand in his way. He has gambled his not inconsiderable wealth on the money that a completely successful insecticide would mean - and his plans look like failing. If DN6 "doesn't go into production, I shall be completely ruined". Callously, he guns down Farrow, and tries to arrange his death to look like an accident. Without conscience, he forces Smithers to help him cover up the crime, and will turn anything he can to his own advantage - even to the point of killing Smithers if he must.

SMITHERS: "I've seen more death than you can imagine - people dying of starvation all over the world. What do you think I started on research for?"

An idealist at heart, Smithers is a weak man, because he allows his idealism to overrule his sense of morality and reason. He is quite willing to be an accomplice to Forester's killing of Farrow, because he feels that DN6 is too important to be stopped over a technical point like murder! His very desire to see starvation ended has blinded him to the facts of DN6's utterly lethal nature until, at the end, he sees the effects of his work in the dead insects that litter his laboratory, and he wants to stop his chemical from being sold. However, it is almost too late, for Forester no longer needs him...

HILDA AND BERT: Hilda: "Bert, it's the same man - no doubt about it!"
Bert: "Well, we'll soon find out..."

Hilda is the local telephone operator, of the kind who listens in on telephone calls when she has nothing else to do. She is otherwise a rural housewife, perhaps in her sixties, who is likely to find great pleasure in knitting clothes for her grandchildren and reading cheap romance novels. Hearing Forester attempting to imitate Farrow by placing a handkerchief over the mouth-piece and speaking into it, she identifies the true owner of the voice with little trouble, finding in this the opportunity for a little local scandal. Her husband, Bert, is the village constable, a less than dynamic law enforcer, but conscientious about his work. We first meet him as he is preparing for duty, pulling on his uniform with slow deliberation. Hilda persuades him to listen as Forester speaks again, both as himself and as Farrow. Bert becomes suspicious, and investigates. He arrives at the house just in time to prevent Smithers being the next victim of the cold Forester...

FEATURE:
SCENIC DESIGN

JEREMY BENTHAM

'Planet of Giants' posed Set Designer Ray Cusick quite a few problems, not normally encountered even when working on a show as complex as 'Doctor Who'. The story called for the Doctor and his friends to be reduced to an inch in size, and therefore every prop. and set they encountered had to be built to a ratio of 70 to 1.

Six outsize sets were required for this story - the channels between the crazy-paving, the outlet of the drain, the overflow pipe, the briefcase, the sink and, most complex of all, the lab bench.

Designing sets, even for 'Doctor Who', usually only requires the Designer to formulate the construction of the three basic walls of a room and some of the special props required which cannot be obtained from stock - such as the machinery used in 'The Daleks' or the Morpho brain creatures in 'The Keys of Marinus'. The outsize sets in 'Planet of Giants' required everything to be tailor made, with very careful consideration given to camera and sound boom positioning.

Of all the sets the sink and the lab bench were the most demanding. Only part of the sink was ever seen - the area around the plug-hole - the necessity of building a huge mock-up of the whole sink being avoided by positioning a camera high up on a boom so that it would look down. Thus only the studio floor (sink base) would fill the screen. This had an added bonus in giving the viewer the notion they were seeing the Doctor and Susan from Ian and Barbara's vantage point on the rim of the sink. The set itself was raised a few feet off the ground on wooden support brackets, to enable the artists to be seen clambering up out of the plug-hole. The plug-hole itself was a masterpiece in set-design with the smooth, stainless steel look being achieved by using a shiny plastic material cut to shape which, under the right lighting, looked like shiny metal.

Flooring was again the major headache in the design of the wooden lab bench. The timber used for such constructions is rarely high grade and so would need to appear ridged to the miniaturised travellers. The planking which was laid down for this set was therefore heavily scored to give the grained look of wood.

For purpose-built props like the briefcase lock, the plug and its chain, and the pipe outlet, Ray Cusick skilfully blended the use of wood, sheet metal and plastics. Pre-filming at the house was done very early on, and so the Designer's task was mainly to do with matching the outsize props to the location shot scenes. The Props Department of the BBC had furnished Farrow's briefcase and so Raymond Cusick was faced with the job of scaling up its lock mechanism to fit the size of the travellers.

The lock was a conventional slide toggle, releasing the clip on a leather fold-over strap. The built-up lock mechanism and the clip were both constructed from plywood built over a hardwood frame to support the weight of the actors. The circular slide toggle was made from vacuum formed plastic - that is to say, a clay mould of the toggle was sculpted, which was then put into a vacuum former. A sheet of thermo-plastic was placed on top and then heated. A strong suction drew the warmed plastic over the mould until it took on the shape of the toggle. When cooled and weighted internally the finished prop. could be fitted onto the set. To achieve the effect of the lock springing open as Ian slid the toggle to one side the clip flap was pivoted like a see-saw out of camera shot. As the toggle was slid over, a stage-hand would pull down the other end of the plank, giving the impression of the lock springing open.

TECHNICAL OBSERVATIONS

'Planet of Giants' was originally planned and recorded as a four-part story, with episodes one to three directed by Mervyn Pinfield. Douglas Camfield debutted as a 'Doctor Who' director with episode four, which was titled "The Urge to Live" and was recorded on Friday 11th. September 1964. All four episodes were complete and fully edited when producer Verity Lambert made the decision to combine the last two episodes, feeling that there was not enough interesting material to warrant fifty minutes television time. The finished compilation used about thirteen minutes of "Crisis" and twelve minutes of "The Urge to Live". The cliff-hanger of episode three was to have been the moment of revelation when the Doctor, Ian and Susan realise that Barbara is ill and could die if they do not soon return to the safety of the TARDIS.

The Doctor was dressed throughout this serial in the long cloak he obtained in 'The Reign of Terror' as a point of continuity.

To avoid having to use a pyrotechnic charge to explode the scanner screen of the malfunctioning TARDIS in episode one, a camera was pointed at a sheet of glass which was then shattered. By switching the camera view through to the TARDIS screen (which was an ordinary TV monitor in those days) the illusion was thus created of the screen being cracked apart.

The TARDIS 'red alert' emergency alarm identified as a submarine klaxon sound effect.

Certain scenes were pre-recorded on film due to the necessary dictates of continuous recording (see 'Season One Special Release'). The cat had to 'act on cue' and so these scenes were pre-recorded, as was the explosion of the aerosol can, for reasons of safety. Film was also used for the moment when the camera zooms back from a shot of the TARDIS by a cliff-face, to reveal the ship located, in fact, in the crazy-paving leading to Smithers' house.

Backdrops used for the scenes with the travellers walking amidst the lawn grass.

The original title for the episode "Dangerous Journey" was "Death in the Afternoon".

Sound was very carefully used in this production. Speech in the lab sink was echoed, and even the odd sound effect of an aircraft passing overhead was added to give the serial a very "normal, everyday" feel to it during the giant scenes.

The travellers were never seen in the same shot as the giants except when Ian is looking at Farrow's dead body. This was done using a distant shot of Ian with a glass overlay of Farrow's head placed close to the camera. The glass was dimly illuminated at the bottom to hide the 'join'. This technique was also applied to similar perspective shots of the travellers looking up at the giant telephone and giant test-tubes.

Very low key lighting was used for scenes with the travellers on the lab bench. This was to give the scenes a depth of field, without the need for a vast set with huge backdrops in the distance.

To stress the sound differences between travellers and giants, special sound mixing was done. Thus, when Hilda Rowse receives the call from the travellers all she hears are high-pitched, speeded-up squeaks. Conversely, the conversation of the giants comes over as low-pitched, slowed-down rumbles when heard by the Doctor's crew.

DOCTOR WHO PRODUCTION CREDITS

Compiled by GARY HOPKINS

SERIAL "J" THREE EPISODES BLACK AND WHITE

"PLANET OF GIANTS"	-	31st. October 1964
"DANGEROUS JOURNEY"	-	7th. November 1964
"CRISIS"	-	14th. November 1964

CAST

DOCTOR WHO.....WILLIAM HARTNELL
IAN CHESTERTON.....WILLIAM RUSSELL
BARBARA WRIGHT.....JACQUELINE HILL
SUSAN FOREMAN.....CAROLE ANN FORD

FORESTER.....ALAN TILVERN
FARROW.....FRANK CRAWSHAW
SMITHERS.....REGINALD BARRATT
HILDA ROWSE.....ROSEMARY JOHNSON
BERT ROWSE.....FRED FERRIS

CREW

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT.....NORMAN STEWART
ASSISTANT FLOOR MANAGERS...VAL McCRIMMON
DAWN ROBERTSON
COSTUME SUPERVISOR.....DAPHNE DARE
MAKE-UP SUPERVISOR.....SONIA MARKHAM
SOUND MIXER.....ALAN FOGG
INCIDENTAL MUSIC.....DUDLEY SIMPSON
STORY EDITOR.....DAVID WHITAKER
DESIGNER.....RAYMOND P. CUSICK
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER.....MERVYN PINFIELD
PRODUCER.....VERITY LAMBERT
DIRECTOR (1, 2).....MERVYN PINFIELD
DIRECTORS (3).....MERVYN PINFIELD
DOUGLAS CAMFIELD

I wanted to deal with the question of ecology and the indiscriminate use of insecticides and other agents which interfered with the balance of nature. At that time (1964), this was a comparatively new matter of concern, and had been enormously boosted by the publication of a book called 'Silent Spring' by Rachel Carson. In discussions with David Whitaker (the script editor at that time) it suddenly hit me that I could combine this subject with the idea of bringing the TARDIS back to Earth in the present time, but greatly reduced in size to the dimensions of a match box. Hence 'Planet of Giants'.

The great problem was how to cope with this from a production point of view. In those days Colour Separation Overlay had not yet been invented and it became necessary actually to build the giant sets in the studio. This involved enormous cost, and it was for this reason that we eventually had to cut out one whole episode. There simply wasn't enough money to cope...

LOUIS MARKS